



# The Weekly Page

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## Pages Learn About Legislature



### Big ideas in government

Throughout the week pages grappled with understanding the three “big ideas” for a representative government: **governing society is a complex process, successful democracies rely on responsible citizens, and government affects our life every day.** As they participated in daily discussions, listened to guest speakers, and proposed bills in mock committee hearings, their understanding around the concepts deepened. On Friday, they wrote about one of the big ideas to demonstrate the depth of their new knowledge.

### Healthcare for all



Olympia – House Bill 2134 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Danielle Wren and Hannah Calas. “This bill addresses the issue of health care and will make sure that all citizens get the medical attention they need,” said Sen. Wren. The bill would adopt a healthcare system similar to the French system. If the bill becomes law, every

person in Washington would pay a health tax, but with that tax all of the citizen's healthcare expenses would be covered. “The overall cost of office visits, ER visits, surgical procedures, and dental work would be reduced significantly,” said Rep. Calas.

### High school star athlete or graduate?



Olympia – Senate Bill 7142 was introduced yesterday by Senators Leah Cook and Erica Clerf. “This bill addresses the issue of academic requirements for high school sports and will raise the achievement of our athletes,” said Sen. Cook. High school athletes at some schools in the state are not on pace to graduate, yet they are still allowed to play. Some schools have very low standards for athletic participation while others have very high ones. This is unfair for the opposing teams. “We feel that such low standards are not helping students succeed,” said Sen. Clerf. This bill will require a minimum grade point average of 2.5 with no failing marks in any classes at all public high schools in the state.



## Mock committees debate bills

Pages worked individually or in small groups to research and write bills designed to address issues which were relevant to them and the state. They had their choice of working up a social bill or a fiscal bill to present in a mock committee hearing on Thursday. Students spent a day either researching social problems or playing the “Ax and Tax” budget game to get information for constructing their bills. They used class templates to transfer the information and their proposed solutions to a very real-looking House or Senate bill. Pages read their bills and “committee members,” governed by the rules of parliamentary procedure, debated the pros and cons of the proposals. A “DO PASS” or “DO NOT PASS” recommendation was then voted upon, allowing a bill to continue on in the legislative process. As in the real political system, some bills died in committee.

## To eat or not to eat: that is the question

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Kelsey Hopstad and Max Dammeier introduced House Bill 1001, which addresses the issue of trans fat content in food products. “The bill is a good one because it will promote the general health of the public,” said Rep. Dammeier. Trans fat is a dangerous substance that is commonly used in food today, according to Rep. Hopstad. As of now, products with less than 0.5 grams per serving of trans fat can be listed as having 0 grams. This bill will only permit food products sold in Washington State to advertise that they include zero trans fat if the product has absolutely no trace of trans fat in it.



## House says cuts/taxes only way to end state’s financial crisis

Olympia—Yesterday, the House Ways and Means Committee heard testimony from Representatives Nick Ho and Jacob Heard regarding the projected revenue shortfall for the 2009-

2011 biennium and the suggested remedies to balance the state operating budget. “We are in a terrible economic crisis, the worst we’ve seen in decades,” said Rep. Ho. Although many legislators had made campaign promises not to raise taxes, the pair saw a need to make up for lost revenues by increasing only the tax on cigarettes and soda, raising \$478 million for the state coffers. “The soft drink is a very popular drink, especially with the youth in our modern society, so a five cent increase would not be a great burden and people will continue to buy the product,” said Rep. Ho. “Unfortunately, there are many people addicted to cigarettes, but with an additional small 50 cent increase per pack, we can raise \$206 million,” he said.



The majority of the budget package included cuts to existing services, such as reductions in the art program by eliminating the Washington State Arts Commission, ending state capital tours, and reducing spending for personal bodyguards for the Governor and Lt. Governor. “We can curtail spending on art in public places for awhile,” said Rep. Heard. “Also, there has never been an attack on our state’s highest officials, so I think we can get by with cutting the protection to the Governor and Lt. Governor by 50 percent.” Closing the state film office was another suggestion by Rep. Ho. “There have only been three successful movies cast in our state—*Twilight*, *10 Things I Hate About You*, and *Sleepless in Seattle*—so there doesn’t seem to be a real need for this office. Besides, it will only be a temporary closure for two years,” he said. “I know times are bad, but we should come out of this situation in good shape if we make some sacrifices now,” said Rep. Heard.





## Teenagers need later start times

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Jamie Venema and Amanda McBride introduced House Bill 1024, which addresses the issue of high school start times. “The bill is a good one because it will improve academic achievement,” said Rep. Venema. This bill will allow teens to sleep longer in the mornings so they can produce better work later at school. Experts say that teenagers need between 8.5 and 9.5 hours of sleep per night. Sixty percent of high school students complain of being tired during the day and 15 percent say they have fallen asleep in class. “We should see improvement in academic scores within the first few months,” said Sen. McBride. If this bill passes, all public high school will be required to start no earlier than 8:30 a.m.



## Bigger, better boundaries



Olympia – Senate Bill 6872 was introduced yesterday by Senator Ben Braskett, Representative Reed Conway, and Representative Bayy Sharp. “This bill addresses the issue of the legislative districts and will reduce complications and costs in the state system,” said Rep. Sharp. Electing legislators through the county government system would be more cost effective than the current legislative district system, as well as utilizing static boundaries to reduce complexity, according to Sen. Braskett. This system is already in place within the Washington State Constitution. “It just makes so much sense,” remarked Rep. Conway. If this bill becomes law, there would be one senator from each county and a number

of representatives for each county related to its population. Every 10 years adjustments could be made to the representative count if the population changes.

## Hunting bill aims to reduce accidents

Olympia – House Bill 3271 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Rebecca Plate and Patrick Swanson. “This bill addresses the issue of hunting safety and will reduce the amount of accidents caused by lack of awareness,” said Rep. Plate. Many public hiking trails overlap with hunting areas resulting in multiple accidents when hunters don’t realize that hikers are nearby. This was the case in the fall when a 14-year-old hunter mistook a hiker for a bear and shot and killed her. This bill will require proper signage marking hunting areas and noting dates of hunting season on public lands. Hikers will also be required to wear reflective vests when in the wild, and young hunters must be accompanied by an adult.



## No more dropouts



Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Nicole Reeves and Haley Goodnight introduced House Bill 2222, which addresses the issue of high school dropouts. “The bill is a good one because it will encourage more students to graduate from high school,” said Rep. Reeves. Students who are in danger of dropping out will be counseled about the lifetime income gaps when comparing high school dropouts, those graduating from high school and those with college degrees. The bill will also create individual schedules for at-risk students. The costs of financing this solution will come from a tax on candy and soda.

## More ZZZs for high school students



Olympia – Yesterday, Representative Elise Loggers introduced House Bill 2468, which addresses the issue of school start times. “The bill is a good one because it reduce the number of high school students falling asleep in class, and it will reduce car accidents caused by fatigued teenage drivers,” said Rep. Loggers. If this bill becomes law, high schools will start no earlier than 8:30

a.m. Teens who find it difficult to go to sleep before midnight will be able to get the required 8.5 to 9.5 hours of rest each night with this new schedule. “This will cost no additional money, because buses for elementary school students would run the route in reverse since students in those grades would start earlier than high school students.

## Reps to stop gang violence

Olympia – House Bill 1002 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Rondell Weisner, Ryan Yonts and Skye Perkins. “This bill addresses the issue of community safety and will eliminate all gang activities in Washington,” said Rep. Weisner. There are reportedly over 10,000 gang members in King County alone, and last year in Seattle 135 of all gun related crimes involved suspected gang members. Police report about 4,355 gang members in Seattle. “Gang violence especially affects young people: 25 percent of all firearm assaults involve juveniles,” said Rep. Yonts. This bill requires courts to sentence all gang related criminals to hard labor camps in remote areas of the state. Camps will be self-sustaining by making gang members produce their own food. The first offense will result in a 2-year sentence; thereafter, the sentence will be 10 years at hard labor.



## Senators require spaying and neutering



Olympia – Senate Bill 7500 was introduced yesterday by Senators Melissa Luper, Imani Kemp, and Katie West. “This bill addresses the issue of pet overpopulation and will reduce the number of animals euthanized at shelters,” said Sen. Kemp.

Animal shelters care for 6-8 million dogs and cats every year in the United States. Approximately 3-4 million are euthanized. This bill requires that all pet owners spay or neuter their cats and dogs. Owners who wish to breed their animals must obtain a permit. If an animal shows up in a shelter and is not fixed, its owner will be fined.

## Early childhood education leads to success

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Kymbreanna Elliott, Desiree Ward, and Hana Brown introduced House Bill 3333, which addresses the issue of early childhood education. “The bill is a good one because it will ensure future success for all public



school children,” said Rep. Elliott. Currently many children do not receive the early learning they need to be successful. Less than half of the state's incoming kindergarteners are adequately prepared, especially those from low-income families. The costs of daycare is 13-17 percent of the median family income, so many families do not have the extra money and time to give their child a proper pre-school education. This bill provides money to establish more pre-school and head-start programs in local public schools. “With the establishment of early education in public schools, all children will reap the benefits,” said Rep. Ward.

## Guest speakers visit Page School

Supreme Court Justice Debra Stephens; Secretary Mary Selecky, Department of Health; Rep. Larry Springer (D-45th) and Sen. Paull Shin (D-21st) joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. The speakers talked about what led them to their current positions and shared insightful information about their jobs and the issues they are currently working on. Pages were able to interact with these guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speaker's questions.







## Medical malpractice suits go under the knife

Olympia – Senate Bill 5050 was introduced yesterday by Senators Janet Torres Garcia and Kylie Johnson. “This bill addresses the issue of malpractice lawsuits and will limit pain and suffering lawsuits to \$20,000,” said Sen. Johnson. This will lower the cost of malpractice insurance for medical professionals and, in turn, will make medical costs cheaper for patients.

## Senate tries to balance budget

Olympia—Yesterday Senators Chayne Abdon, Brandon Bannister, Chase Cardwell, Cody Countryman, Kristofer Davies, Shannon Elliott, Michael Hunner, Chandler Luke, Nick Moolenijzer, Conrad Nark, Peter Roth and Wesley VanDevanter met with the Senate Ways and Means Committee to pound out hard solutions to a serious budget shortfall predicted for the next biennium. “There

just doesn’t seem to be any way around raising some taxes,” said Sen. VanDevanter. Every senator advocated taxing citizens rather than balancing the budget through serious cuts to services. The most popular taxes were those on soft drinks, cigarettes, liquor, and bottled water. Even though many thought the increased taxes might actually reduce sales on certain items, most rationalized that these were luxuries that people would not do without, especially since most of the increases were modest and wouldn’t be that noticeable. “As a modest tax being instituted on a widely consumed product, the 5 cent increase per soda should not cause a great drop in the purchase of soft drinks because they are cheap and very popular. This will bring in an estimated \$272 million,” said Sen. Luke. “In Washington State an estimated 16 percent of



adults are smokers. Smoking is a necessity for those who have addictions to nicotine, so they will keep buying no matter what the price,” said Sen. Roth, regarding the suggested \$1 increase in the cigarette tax, which is expected to raise \$180 million.

Hoping to raise \$2 billion toward the deficit, Sen. Hunner advocated a temporary 7.5 percent bump to the sales tax over the next two years. “This is a good remedy because it is a very quick way to make money and people have some control over how much they are willing to spend. If they are willing to cut back on purchases, they won’t be spending any more than they already are,” he said. A few senators were willing to make some cuts to services. The most popular cut was to state spending on goods and services. “Cutting the purchase of office supplies and services such as janitorial help, event catering and staff retreats by 25 percent is important during this financial crisis,” said Sen. Bannister. “Since our citizens have to cut down on their expenses, there is no reason that the government can’t, as well,” added Sen. Cardwell.

Other cuts included reducing the spending on personal bodyguards for the Governor and the Lt. Governor, halting teacher raises, and cutting the marketing of state parks, “Teachers are paid well, have good benefits, and are secure in their jobs, unlike many of our citizens who are unemployed. After our budget troubles are over, we can consider giving teachers the raises they are due,” said Sen. Abdon.

“We are all going to have to tighten our belts and suffer some uncomfortable situations until this budget deficit is turned around,” said Sen. Elliott.



## New bill gives kids healthy choices

Olympia – House Bill 3016 was introduced yesterday by Representative Mayte Garcia. “This bill addresses the issue of childhood obesity and will increase the health of Washington citizens. We must work together to be a healthy state,” said Rep. Garcia. Washington spends \$1.3 billion annually on health-care costs related to adult obesity. Health conditions caused by being overweight are seen now in children which were formally seen only in adults, such as type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure. In order to reduce obesity in children, this bill will require all school districts to provide menus rich in nutrients and to reduce the amount of junk food offered in vending machines.



### Use your head, wear a helmet!



Olympia – Senate Bill 5776 was introduced yesterday by Senators Hannah Solem, Benjamin Solem, Paul Roth. “This bill addresses the issue of helmet safety

and will reduce the risk of head, facial, and spinal trauma in young people. We also hope this bill will reduce the amount of skiing and/or snowboarding deaths each year,” said Sen. Hannah Solem. Dr. Robert Williams, associate professor of anesthesia and pediatrics at Fletcher Allen Health Care in Burlington, Vermont, has said, “Wearing a helmet reduces the risk of having a head injury by forty to sixty percent. There is no downside to wearing a helmet.” If this bill becomes law, Washington will be the first state to mandate helmets when participating in skiing or snowboarding for youth under age eighteen.

### Page program over 100 years old



The Legislative page program has been in existence since 1891. This photo is of pages who served in past years. The first female page served in 1937. In the past, pages were required to do ironing and cleaning for mem-

bers. Page duties today are much more professional.

### Competitive edge results in *Jeopardy* win

On Friday pages tested their knowledge of the Legislative process in a spirited game of *Jeopardy*. Winning teams were comprised of individuals who had learned the most during their week in Page School and were awarded certificates and brightly colored stickers that they wore proudly for the rest of the day.

### Teachers passionate about civic education

The Washington State Legislature’s 2009 Page School employs teachers Judi Orr, a certificated teacher, and Matt Kreiling, former Legislative intern and lobbyist. Judi is a retired social studies and English teacher who taught for over 35 years in the Clo-

ver Park School District, and Matt lobbied for the Washington Student Lobby representing college students throughout Washington. “I really enjoy facilitating learning and watching those light bulbs go off each week,” said Matt, as he introduced himself on Monday. Both teachers enjoyed meeting so many students from all parts of Washington and teaching them more about how state government functions. “I’d be a committee ‘junkie’ if I wasn’t teaching each day. Watching citizens testify about various issues alongside experts in the field is just fascinating to me,” said Judi.



### Page School on the web

The Page School has its own web site. You can find us at: [www1.leg.wa.gov/WorkingwithLeg/PageSchool/](http://www1.leg.wa.gov/WorkingwithLeg/PageSchool/). This newsletter has been posted there.

